

# Washington State Patrol Media Release

**Chief Ronal W. Serpas**



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**March 25, 2003**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **February Numbers Show WSP Making Connection on Our Roadways**

The month of February was one of the busiest ever for the Washington State Patrol, increasing dramatically its numbers of contacts with violators from the same time period last year.

Chief Ronal Serpas reported today that DUI contacts were up 23%, from 1,323 in February 2002 to 1,623 in February 2003; Seat belt contacts up 60%, from 6,118 in February 2002 to 9,774 in February 2003; Speeders up 23% from 35,501 in February 2002 to 44,794 in 2003; and aggressive drivers were contacted 1,872 times in February 2002 as opposed to 3,431 in February 2003...an 83% increase.

"I am so proud of the men and women in the Washington State Patrol who are working hard to educate our citizens about highway safety," Chief Ronal Serpas said. "Making our highways safer for our families, friends, and loved ones is our top priority," he said.

Serpas noted that in 70% of the traffic stops, only warnings are given, not tickets. In addition, 1,100 times per day throughout the state, troopers are helping people with flat tires, directions, or transporting them to get gas.

"It's not about tickets," Serpas said. "Our troopers are extremely busy providing education, safety, and service on Washington highways," he said.

In addition to the four core mission areas, Chief Serpas noted that routine traffic stops lead to great police work. "I am pleased that many of the traffic stops we make on our roadways lead to drug arrests, stolen vehicles recovered, and discovering persons with outstanding felony or misdemeanor warrants," he noted, adding "I was taught many years ago that quality traffic stops lead to great police work."

Serpas said that in the last twelve months, 433 stolen vehicles were recovered from traffic stops, a 19% increase over the previous twelve-month period. There were 1,835 felony drug arrests (a 37% increase over the previous twelve months) and 7,111 misdemeanor drug arrests (a 49% increase over the previous twelve months) resulting from traffic stops this past year. In addition, 2,490 felony warrant arrests and 8,864 misdemeanor warrant arrests were made from routine highway stops. These numbers also represent significant increases from the previous twelve-month period, 39% and 45% respectively.

Serpas noted that one of the statistics he is most excited about is the fact that the WSP is responsible for taking an average of 373 drunk drivers off of our roads each week.

"Our troopers are highly professional and dedicated to the safety of all of our citizens," Serpas explained. "They are out there all over the state making a difference in our quality of life, and holding those people accountable for breaking the law, whether it be because of putting others in danger by driving drunk or aggressively, or by having outstanding drug or warrant violations."

Serpas concluded by saying that even with the increased activity throughout the state, complaints against the Patrol are down by 22%.

"I believe that our efforts are truly making a difference," he noted.

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